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INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 8062
RHMCSUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

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DEPT PLEASE PASS TO NEA/ARP FOR SWALKER/BSHUKAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/11/2016

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KISL](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: SAUDI ARABIA'S WAR ON TERROR -- NOT OVER YET

REF: A. RIYADH 7503

[1](#)B. RIYADH 8990

Classified By: Ambassador James C. Oberwetter for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) While the SAG continues to make progress on its counterterrorism efforts (Ref A), recent events in the Kingdom clearly illustrate that the war on terror is far from over. On December 7, armed men opened fire on a guard post at Jeddah's maximum-security Al-Ruwais prison, killing two security officers and wounding three others. The perpetrators remain at large, and there has been speculation that the attack was an attempt to free several suspected extremists who had been arrested the previous day. This incident followed recent Saudi Press Agency announcements that the Ministry of Interior (MoI) has detained 136 individuals in operations throughout the country since September, including a would-be suicide bomber. MoI spokesman Mansour al-Turki stated that some of those detained were leaders of terrorist cells and 115 were Saudi. In addition to "plotting a suicide bombing," officials said that at least one cell of 31 individuals was planning abductions and killings.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) These incidents are by no means isolated events. On July 8, six Saudis and one Yemeni terrorist escaped from Malaz prison in Riyadh. Saudi security forces have since killed two of the escapees and re-captured another two. Of the three remaining escapees, two are believed to remain in the Kingdom and at least one is suspected of plotting attacks against housing compounds, the U.S. Consulate in Jeddah, oil facilities, and other targets that Saudi-based al-Qaida previously attacked. The remaining Malaz escapee likely fled to Iraq. As a result of the Malaz investigation, Saudi authorities arrested at least 47 individuals, some of whom have direct ties to al-Qaida. In August, security forces captured terrorism suspects in Mecca, Medina, Riyadh, and Jeddah, where two of the Malaz escapees were seized. SAG officials continue to stress -- mostly in private meetings, but sometimes publicly -- that terrorist activity remains a major concern for them and that, despite their efforts, terrorist cells in Saudi Arabia are actively recruiting and planning operations.

[1](#)3. (S) Dr. Saad al-Jabri, Advisor to the Assistant Minister of Interior, told EconOffs on November 26 (Ref B) that al

Qaida recruiters frequently target Saudis residing in the north of the country . He lamented, "We are fighting a hidden war, and our own people are being recruited to fight against us." He emphasized the deep tribal and family ties that bind Saudi and Iraqi Sunnis in the Saudi Arabia-Iraq border region. He stated prior to 9/11, al Qaida had recruited from the al-Ghamdi and Qahtani tribes in the southern part of the country, while now recruits are coming from the Shammari and Anaiza tribes in the north. He claimed there were Al Qaida sleeper cells in Qateef, Eastern Province and predicted, "We will have a rough six months ahead."

14. (S) COMMENT: Saudi Arabia's increasingly modern infrastructure, booming economy, and vibrant cities make it easy to be lulled into a false sense of security. However, the numbers speak for themselves. Terrorist activity is alive and well in the Kingdom, and the Saudis' war on terror is far from over. END COMMENT.
OBERWETTER